Ontario

Ontario Women's Directorate



# NEWS RELEASE

**July 4, 2007**

## MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT RENEWS CALL TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
### *Encourages All Victims To Report Sexual Assault*

**QUEEN'S PARK** – The McGuinty government is renewing its call for all Ontarians to work together to end violence against women.

"I am deeply troubled by recent reports of alleged sexual assaults in Toronto schools targeted at specific communities," said Sandra Pupatello, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. "That is why I am asking all Ontarians to once again join with our government as we redouble our efforts to prevent violence and harassment against women. I also want to make it clear that our government will be there to make sure that women who are victimized get the help they need."

The government is spending over $190 million annually on preventing violence against women and providing supports when violence does occur. This includes more than $82 million in new funding committed under the four-year Domestic Violence Action Plan, which is providing better community-based supports, implementing public education and training strategies, strengthening Ontario's criminal and family justice systems response, and providing better access to services for newcomer communities.

The McGuinty government recently invested $6 million to help 107 community agencies deliver localized and innovative services and projects that help victims of sexual assault and other crimes.

This investment is part of a $15-million three-year Community Grants program to fund community organizations that assist victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, including victims of sexual exploitation and other victims of violence.

"Sexual assault is a criminal offence that devastates the lives of all those it touches. It has no place in our communities and will not be tolerated," said Attorney General Michael Bryant. "We encourage the reporting of these despicable crimes to police so that we can hold the perpetrators accountable and provide the victims with the assistance they need immediately following an incident and right through the criminal justice process."

Victims should call the Victim Support Line, a province-wide, bilingual, toll-free information line providing a range of services to victims of crime. The number is 1-888-574-2888 in Ontario or 416-314-2447 in Toronto. Sexual assault victims can speak with a counsellor about supports and services available in their communities.

The McGuinty government and Ontarians are working together to achieve results in supporting victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Further initiatives include:

- A $4.9 million public education campaign that teaches youth ages eight to 14 about healthy, equal relationships to help them identify and stop unhealthy behaviours
- $31 million to make Ontario's schools safer and building on its Safe Schools Strategy to make student safety the top priority while also ensuring that there are strong consequences for inappropriate behaviour

- A three-year, $3 million partnership with Kids Help Phone that has doubled the 24-hour helpline's capacity to provide anonymous counselling to students in Ontario who are dealing with bullying issues. The funding has allowed Kids Help Phone to create a section on bullying prevention on their website. Students are also able to use an on-line letter builder tool to easily report bullying to their teacher
- A province-wide school administrators training program in the 2006-07 school year on bullying prevention that included training on establishing a confidential reporting system. The content included bullying related to racism, sexism, and homophobia
- $13 million per year for Ontario's 38 sexual assault/rape crisis centres, which offer a wide variety of counselling, information and support services to victims and survivors of sexual abuse
- $1.3 million in one-time funding to sexual assault agencies across Ontario for public education, training and facility improvements.

For more information about sexual violence prevention, warning signs and where to get help, please visit www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd.

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